

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 250

PS 023 601

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TITLE Student Evaluation in an Integrated Preschool Classroom.  
PUB DATE [94]  
NOTE 16p.  
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)  
  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Check Lists; Classroom Observation Techniques;  
\*Classroom Techniques; Evaluation Methods; Inclusive Schools;  
Individualized Education Programs;  
\*Portfolio Assessment; Preschool Education; \*Special Needs Students; \*Student Evaluation

## ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how preschool teachers can use observational and portfolio assessment techniques to evaluate both typical and special needs children in inclusive preschool classrooms. Explaining that portfolios can contain teacher observations, checklists of student activities, and samples of student work, it suggests techniques for organizing student portfolios and integrating them into the individualized education plans (IEPs) of special needs students. The final section concludes that portfolios, when combined with developmental checklists, constitute a realistic approach to developmentally appropriate assessment in the preschool classroom. An appendix contains a sample portfolio checklist. (Contains 16 references.) (MDM)

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Running head: PRESCHOOL STUDENT EVALUATION

ED 387 250

Student Evaluation in  
an Integrated Preschool Classroom  
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### Abstract

Evaluation of student's progress in a typical preschool classroom is a difficult task. It is even more difficult in an integrated classroom when the teacher must also evaluate children's progress on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) as well. If the evaluation is done well it will provide the teacher with information concerning the individual's progress as well as serve as a driving force for the curriculum. An evaluation should be ongoing, developmentally appropriate and flexible. This article suggests a technique to provide the classroom teacher with a system of organizing student work, developmental checklists and anecdotal records into a portfolio that will provide the means of evaluating all children. It is hoped that the same system will be used to document growth within the regular program as well as on IEP goals, thereby eliminating the need for different approaches or duplicate work.

Student Evaluation in  
an Integrated Preschool Classroom

Bredenkamp and Rosegrant (1990), define assessment as the process of observing and documenting children's work to serve as the basis for making educational decisions concerning that child. Assessment is used within a preschool classroom to guide curriculum and instruction, document a child's progress, and serve as a means for informing parents. (Bredenkamp and Rosegrant, 1990). This process often becomes very time-consuming for the teacher. In the case of integrated programs, there are sometimes different systems used to evaluate the children. A child's progress within the standard curriculum is evaluated one way and progress on IEP goals another. The present review will show how portfolios, consisting of student work, developmental checklists, and anecdotal records, can provide the early childhood teacher with a manageable method of assessing all children with one system.

Observation

Bredenkamp and Rosegrant (1990) recommend assessment based on observation as the most effective means of getting to know children and the strategy that best fits National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines for assessment. Observation avoids some of the disadvantages of

formal, standardized assessments such as an environment that is unfamiliar, requiring tasks that are not relevant, and viewing different aspects of the child at different times rather than the whole child (Linder, 1990; Meisels, 1993). In an early childhood program, observation allows the teacher to collect data without disrupting the normal routine and get a more accurate demonstration of the child's ability (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990).

#### Methods of Recording Observations

There are many different ways to record observations. Anecdotal records, running records, specimen records, time sampling, event sampling and the use of observation tools such as rating scales and checklists are a variety of methods discussed in current literature( Beaty, 1990; Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990; Meisels, 1993; Student Portfolios, 1993; Wright and Borland, 1993). These studies also highlight some advantages and disadvantages of each method. Frequently, the purpose of the observation is what determines which method would be most efficient(Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1990; Beaty, 1990; Michigan State Board of Education, 1992).

#### Portfolios

With so many options available for collecting observations and so many reasons for doing observations, a manageable method for classroom teachers is necessary. The system needs to be

flexible, include the possibility for many different types of information and give a picture of the whole child on which educational strategies can be based. A portfolio is one possible system for organizing data on a child. It is a collection of a child's work and observational records that demonstrate the child's growth and progress over a period of time(Wright and Borland, 1993; Meisels, 1993).

Portfolios are not all the same. Decisions must be made concerning the content of a portfolio. Contents of a portfolio are either work samples and/or records of observations (Wright and Borland, 1993). Work samples can include actual student's work, photographs of children's constructions, videos, and tape recordings. Portfolios can consist of only children's work samples or a combination of work samples and observation records. (Student Portfolios, 1993; Wright and Borland, 1993)

#### Components of a Preschool Portfolio

For the preschool child, a portfolio which consists of work samples, checklists and anecdotal records would supply a manageable means of organizing information that would enable the teacher to plan curriculum, evaluate the child and evaluate progress on IEP goals.

Work samples from the child should be kept in the portfolio in chronological order. Each piece should be dated. Preschool students will not have the abundance of student work that will fit in a file that older children will have. Certainly samples

of the child's drawings and emergent writing (from a scribble to copying print) will be valuable. If affordable, photographs, videos and tape recordings would be excellent to show play and social skills. These electronic devices are not always available and if they are available, are not very convenient.

Some specific ideas of work samples were mentioned. Wright and Borland (1993) recommend that self-portraits be done at the beginning of the year and at scheduled intervals through the year to document cognitive growth. They also recommend standard samples, which are teacher selected activities the entire class participates in to help assess certain skills. Meisels (1993) recommends a similar approach, structuring repeated samples to be done at least three times a year. Having the children retell stories that have been read to them and observing the memory and sequencing skills is a possible component of a portfolio (Student Portfolios, 1993).

Checklists, another component of a student's portfolio, have many advantages. They are easy to use, can be used in the presence of the child or later based on memories, help focus observations, and are especially helpful in curriculum planning (Beaty, 1990). They can serve as a basis for parent conferences. They can demonstrate where the child is currently functioning and what skills will be emerging next. They depict progress of the child without comparison to other children. They can also depict progress on IEP goals when goals are based on items found on the

checklist. The disadvantages of checklists include lacking information on the quality of behavior, telling only if a behavior is present or not and may miss other important behaviors simply because they are not on the list (Beaty, 1990).

To minimize the disadvantages, the checklist can be paired with a third item within the portfolio, running records or anecdotal records. In this way, important behaviors that are not on the checklist will still be noted. Although some teachers have been reported to complain that anecdotal records require a lot of time, they also report that the information gained is worth it.

The checklist, paired with anecdotal or running records, can be a very important part of a preschool portfolio. The student work placed in the portfolio can support items on the checklist and give a fuller picture of the child's abilities.

#### Checklists

A checklist is a list of behaviors that are arranged in some order. Many checklists for young children are arranged in a developmental sequence. Beaty(1990) listed suggestions to consider when developing a checklist. The items should be short and in objective terms. They should be positive. They should be representative of a child's behavior but not all inclusive. All items should be easily understood by anyone using the checklist.

A checklist was developed after examining a variety of assessment tools (Barclay & Breheny, 1994; Beaty, 1990; Brigance, 1991; Charlesworth & Lind, 1990; Dodge, 1988; Hill, 1993;

Johnson-Martin, Attermeier & Hacker, 1990; Linder, 1993; McCarney, Ed.D. 1992; McClellen & Katz, 1993; Roskos & Neuman, 1994). This checklist (see Appendix) was developed to target preschool skills and reflect the Bucyrus Early Childhood Program. Items were

selected based upon ease of observation as well as representing as closely as possible the range of behaviors which might be present in a typical class. It is hoped that this checklist, used along with anecdotal records and work samples, will provide our program with the tools necessary to evaluate all children's progress, including progress of children with special needs. By carefully choosing items for the checklist that are developmental and generally addressed by our curriculum, the portfolio should provide sufficient documentation for noting progress on IEP goals.

#### Conclusion

Portfolios, when combined with developmental checklists, constitute a realistic approach to developmentally appropriate assessment in a preschool classroom. Although portfolio use with older children has received the most attention, there are ways to utilize this approach in a preschool setting.

When developmental checklists, children's work samples and anecdotal or running records are combined in a portfolio, it creates a very useful assessment tool. By evaluating the data collected, a teacher can modify the curriculum to meet individual

strengths and needs. A teacher can also utilize the data with parents. The information can be the basis for documenting progress on IEP goals and generating new goals when necessary. The portfolio presents a picture of what the child can do and where the child is heading. A report card or progress report cannot demonstrate a child's growth as graphically as samples of the child's work. They also cannot pinpoint a child's strengths and areas which need support as checklists and other narrative records can. Therefore, the portfolio, with checklists, narrative records and work samples, represents a developmentally appropriate method of assessing young children in an integrated preschool classroom

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## Appendix

## Preschool Checklist

Rating: check items if consistently evident and indicate date  
leave items blank if the item is inconsistent or not evident

## SOCIAL

## General Skills

## Date

<input type="checkbox"/> Can answer whether he or she is a boy or a girl	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Can stay involved in an activity for a reasonable amount of time	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Maintains self control in a group situation (walks in line, etc.)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Does not cling to classroom staff excessively	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes eye contact when speaking with adults or children	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes activity choices without teacher's help	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Can express anger in words rather than actions	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Takes turns without a fuss	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Negotiates and compromises with others	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Usually comes to classroom willingly	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Participates in classroom routine with adult direction	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Participates in classroom routine on own	_____

## Social Play

<input type="checkbox"/> Plays by self with or without objects	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Plays parallel to others with little or no interaction	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Plays parallel to others constructing or creating something	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Plays with others with some theme but lacks story line or common goal (3 or 4 children play firemen but each enacts own ideas independent of others)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Plays cooperatively, negotiates roles and helps direct	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Plays cooperatively with a group constructing or creating something	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Gains access to ongoing groups at play or work	_____

## COMMUNICATION

## Spoken Language

<input type="checkbox"/> Uses only one or two word phrases	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Speaks in simple sentences of more than 2 words, "I like to swing."	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Speaks well enough that an outsider understands	_____

- Usually expresses self with at least 4 words \_\_\_\_\_
- Says first and last name when asked \_\_\_\_\_
- Verbally initiates interaction with others \_\_\_\_\_
- Verbally indicates choice of activities with a short sentence \_\_\_\_\_
- Sings song or says rhyme of about 30 words (words may be repeated) \_\_\_\_\_
- Makes up and tells well developed and detailed stories \_\_\_\_\_
- Takes turn to talk and listens to others (sustains conversation for several turns) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plays with rhyming words \_\_\_\_\_

## COGNITIVE

*General Knowledge*

Points to      Matches      Names

Shapes: circle, square, triangle, star

Colors: basic eight

- Knows what happened yesterday \_\_\_\_\_
- Plays simple games with little adult supervision \_\_\_\_\_
- Sorts objects by color, shape or name (all cars, blue, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
- Sorts objects by category (toys, animals, food) \_\_\_\_\_
- Can work 4 piece puzzles      8 piece      10+ piece

*Drawing*

- Scribbles on paper \_\_\_\_\_
- Forms basic shapes \_\_\_\_\_
- Draws human as circle with arms and legs attached \_\_\_\_\_
- Draws identifiable object without model \_\_\_\_\_

*Block Play*

- Can pile blocks and lay flat (may use cars on block roads) \_\_\_\_\_
- Can build enclosures (may be used as fences or as buildings) \_\_\_\_\_
- Can build bridges \_\_\_\_\_
- Can build symmetrical buildings and use patterns of blocks \_\_\_\_\_
- Can build complex structures and often label them for dramatic play \_\_\_\_\_

*Number Concepts*

- Can rote count to 5      to 10      to 20      to 20+ \_\_\_\_\_
- Can count up to 3 objects (in a row)      to 5      to 10 \_\_\_\_\_
- Can take up to 3 objects      up to 5      up to 10 \_\_\_\_\_
- Can put up to 5 items in order by size (height, width, length) \_\_\_\_\_
- Can demonstrate groups of objects that are more and less than a given group \_\_\_\_\_

## Literacy

- Shows interest when stories are read
- Can sit for a time and read or look at a book independently
- Can picture-read, tell a story from the pictures
- Recalls most of the essential parts and characters of a story
- Can name some letters and numbers
- Can recognize own name in print in the classroom

## MOTOR SKILLS

### Gross Motor

- Walks down steps with alternating feet
- Runs with control over speed and direction
- Jumps over an obstacle with two feet
- Pedals a tricycle
- Hops 3x on one foot       Hops forward 8x with each foot
- Kicks a rolled ball
- Throws a ball using a step-throw sequence
- Catches a ball without trapping it against the body
- Gallops                     Skips

### Fine Motor

- Can screw on lids
- Can usually button large buttons
- Can usually start and zip a jacket or vest
- Can usually snap
- Can fold a paper in half (without a demonstration)

### Cutting Skills

- Can hold scissors correctly
- Can snip paper
- Can cut smoothly across paper
- Can cut simple shapes (circle, square) smoothly on a line
- Can cut out complex pictures

## Writing Skills

Can copy:  a circle  a cross  a square  an x  
 a diagonal line  a V  a triangle

Can accurately trace a simple stencil

Pretends to write by scribbling horizontally

Pretends to write using some real letters

- Can copy own first name \_\_\_\_\_
- Can write name, using real letters, in identifiable fashion \_\_\_\_\_
- Can write name correctly in linear manner \_\_\_\_\_